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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 002206

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: OMRI SHARON SEES HARD WORK AHEAD ON DISENGAGEMENT
REFERENDUM; DISMISSES GREEK ISLAND SCANDAL

REF: TEL AVIV 2199

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Richard LeBaron for reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) PM Sharon's son and Likud MK, Omri Sharon, told poloff on April 14 -- before the PM's White House meeting -- that the main problem facing the pro-disengagement campaign is getting enough Likud members out to vote in the May 2 Likud referendum on the unilateral withdrawal plan. Sharon worries that those opposed to the plan will be more motivated to vote than the plan's supporters. When asked about specific tactics to motivate supporters to vote, Sharon could only stress that it would take hard work, including getting out and talking to Likud members. He also noted that Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz would be leading the campaign to instill confidence among Likud voters that the disengagement plan would not compromise Israel's security (reftel). While he would not speculate whether the plan would receive a majority of Likud support, Omri Sharon seemed confident that with enough hard work at convincing the rank-and-file to vote for the plan, the pro-disengagement campaign would be successful. Sharon did not hide his high hopes for what assurances President Bush would provide his father later that day. He asserted that Likud members' support for disengagement would hinge in part on the support the PM's plan would receive from President Bush. Sharon predicted that if the plan receives a majority in the referendum, most Likud ministers will decide to support it.

2. (C) Omri Sharon belittled the significance of the so-called "Greek Island Affair," stressing that "there is absolutely nothing to it," and dismissed any prospect that AG Menachem Mazuz would recommend PM Sharon be indicted on related bribery charges.

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LeBaron